

Message Text

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ACTION AF-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-06 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01

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R 280900Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3185

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR MR SS SP AG MO

SUBJECT: YEAR END SPANISH SAHARA ROUND-UP

REF: (A) NOUAKCHOTT A-4; (B) NOUAKCHOTT 1142; (C) NOUAKCHOTT A-18

SUMMARY: GIRM CONTINUES MAINTAIN LOW PROFILE ON SAHARA ISSUE WHILE KEEPING OPTIONS OPEN WITH ALL INTERESTED PARTIES. WALKING SOFTLY IS NATURAL GAIT FOR COUNTRY THAT WIELDS NO STICK BUT IS FACED WITH ISSUE OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE. END SUMMARY

1. DESPITE PRESS COVERAGE AND OFFICIAL COMMENT IN SPANISH, MOROCCAN AND ALGERIAN CAPTIALS ON RECENT UN VOTE TO SUBMIT SAHARA CONTROVERSY TO ICJ AS WELL AS ON REPORTS OF STEPPED
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UP GUERRILLA WARFARE IN SPANISH SAHARA, GIRM CONTINUES

ALMOST TOTAL SILENCE ON ISSUE. THERE HAS BEEN NO MENTION IN LOCAL PRESS OR RADIO OF EITHER UN VOTE OR DECEMBER 18 FIRE FIGHT IN SPANISH SAHARA NEAR MAURITANIAN BORDER. SIMILARLY, DURING LAST SEVERAL MONTHS, GIRM HAS NOT KEPT RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS CURRENT ON EVOLUTION MAURITANIA'S SAHARAN POLICY.

2. WITH SPECTRUM OF SOLUTIONS FOR SAHARAN CONTROVERSY RANGING FROM SAHARAN INDEPENDENCE THROUGH VARIOUS FORMULAS FOR FEDERATION, DIVISION OR ANNEXATION, MAURITANIA PREFERS TO SAY AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE UNTIL FUTURE BECOMES LESS CLOUDY. WITH NO STICK TO WIELD, GIRM MUST ALSO WALK SOFTLY AMONG OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES LEST IT ALIENATE A POTENTIAL ALLY. FROM MAURITANIAN OPTIC, ALL POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS INVOLVE DIFFICULT TRADE-OFF BETWEEN CONFLICTING MAURITANIAN NATIONAL INTERESTS OF AVOIDING COMMON BORDER WITH MOROCCO AND GAINING SHARE OF SAHARAN FISHING AND MINERAL WEALTH.

3. AS INTERIM POSITION, GIRM CONTINUES TO ADVOCATE SELF DETERMINATION THROUGH UN SPONSORED REFERENDUM WHILE NOT GIVING UP IT'S OWN CLAIM TO TERRITORY. MAURITANIA IS ALSO KEEPING OPEN AND, IN SOME CASES, IMPROVING ITS LINES WITH OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES.

4. WITH SPAIN, FOR EXAMPLE, GIRM HAS MARKEDLY REDUCED TONE AND FREQUENCY OF CRITICISM OF SPANISH POLICY IN SAHARAN TERRITORY. IN MID-1973 GIRM HAD ADVOCATED LIBERATION OF SPANISH SAHARA "BY ALL MEANS" AND ALLOWED OPEN OPERATION OF POPULAR LIBERATION FRONT OF SAGUIA EL HAMRA AND RIO D' ORO (PLF) IN MAURITANIA. ALTHOUGH PLF CONTINUES TO EXIST HERE, IT IS NOW BARRED FROM MAKING ANY PROPAGANDA STATEMENTS FROM MAURITANIAN TERRITORY. GIRM HAS ALSO COOPERATED WITH SPANISH FORCES TO PREVENT PLF GUERRILLAS FROM USING MAURITANIA AS A BASE (REF A). IN NOVEMBER 28 YEAR-END SPEECH, PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH COURTED SPANISH GOOD WILL BY REFERING TO "OUR TRADITIONAL FRIEND" AND OPINING THAT "WITHOUT DOUBT" EXISTING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WILL INCREASE AFTER AMICABLE SOLUTION OF SAHARAN PROBLEM. GIRM HAS TOLD SPANISH THAT IF SAHARA BECOMES INDEPENDENT, MAURITANIA HOPES SPAIN WILL STAY AS PROTECTOR OF INFANT NATION AND, INCIDENTALLY, SERVE AS BUFFER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BETWEEN MAURITANIA AND MOROCCO. (REF B)

5. ALGERIA CONTINUES AS GIRM'S GOVERNMENTAL MODEL, POLITICAL ADVISOR AND INTERNATIONAL SPONSOR. MOST IMPORTANT FOR RELATIVELY POWERLESS MAURITANIA IS ALGERIA'S COUNTER WEIGHT TO ANY RESURGENCE OF MOROCCAN SOUTHERN EXPANSIONISM (REF C). DESPITE SPANISH EMBASSY ASSERTION THAT ALGERIANS ARE "FURIOUS" WITH GIRM FOR COURTING FAVOR IN RABAT, THE MAURITANIAN-ALGERIAN

CONNECTION REMAINS INTACT.

6. MOROCCAN-MAURITANIAN RAPPROACHMENT HAS DEVELOPED RAPIDLY SINCE LOW IN LATE AUGUST WHEN GOM BEGAN CAMPAIGN OF NAME CALLING IN MOROCCAN PRESS. HIGHLIGHTING RECENT RAPPORT HAS BEEN GIRM SUPPORT IN UN FOR ICJ REFERRAL, OULD DADDAH'S DECEMBER 9 MEETING WITH HASSAN IN FEZ AND THE COMINGS AND GOINGS OF NUMEROUS MOROCCAN AID MISSIONS SINCE THEN.

7. GIRM HAS SHOWN DIPLOMATIC FINESSE IN THIS FOUR-WAY BALANCING ACT AND IS REALISTIC ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT IF MAURITANIA IS TO AVOID COMMON BORDER WITH MOROCCO AND LOSS OF SHARE OF SPANISH SAHARAN WEALTH, IT MUST HAVE ALLIES. GIRM IS ONLY COUNTRY INVOLVED IN SPANISH SAHARA DISPUTE THAT HAS GOOD RELATIONS WITH OTHER PRINCIPALS. SAHARANS MIGHT EVEN VIEW GIRM AS MOST ACCEPTABLE GOVERNMENT WITH WHICH THEY COULD BE ASSOCIATED. GIRM (A) HAS ADVOCATED SELF-DETERMINATION (B) IS GOVERNMENT OF KINDRED TRIBES AND (C) AS WEAKEST OF INTERESTED PARTIES WOULD PROBABLY GRANT GREATEST DEGREE AUTONOMY SHOULD SPANISH SAHARA FEDERATE WITH ANOTHER COUNTRY. SHINN

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